

Trail of the Tornado

Scenes Along the Path of the Storm that Devastated Many
Hundreds of Omaha Homes on Easter Sunday Evening.

Panoramic View
38th and Wakeley Sts



Talbot Home
42 St and Farnam

Coffman Home - 38th and California Sts

By JAMES B. WOOTAN.

'Tis my task, O queen, to consider what you have done: on me it is incumbent to execute your commands. You condescend to me whatever of power I have, my sceptre and Jove. You grant me to sit at the tables of the gods and you make me lord of the storms and tempests.

Thus having said, whirling the point of his spear, he struck the hollow mountain's side: and the winds, as in a formed battalion, rush forth at every vent and scour over the lands in a hurricane. They press upon the ocean and at once, east and south, and stormy southwest, plough up the whole deep from its lowest bottom and roll vast billows to the shores. The cries of the seamen succeed and the cracking of the cordage. In an instant clouds snatch the heavens and day from the eyes of the Trojans: sable night sits brooding on the sea, thunder roars from pole to pole, the sky glazes with repeated flashes and all nature threatens them with immediate death.

—Virgil's graphic description of Aeolus's servility to cruel Juno and a bit of what follows his obedience of her commands.



Looking Down 19th
Ave from Locust



Southwest from 38th
and Chicago

THE tornado struck Omaha Sunday at about 5:50 p. m., entering at Fifty-fourth and Center streets, the extreme southwest, sweeping diagonally across the city to the northeast, going over the bluff at about Fourteenth and Spencer streets, demolishing the Missouri Pacific roundhouse, leveling the big trestle work of the Illinois Central across Carter lake, wrecking some buildings at the Red and Gun club and vanishing.

The path of the storm reached for a length of some six miles with a width from two to six blocks.

It resulted in 120 deaths, to which should be added seven in Ralston and eleven in Council Bluffs; injured, \$50, not fatally; totally demolished 550 homes; partially wrecked 1,250 other homes; eleven churches, eight schools and a number of small stores and shops; rendered 2,500 persons homeless and destroyed or damaged property valued at \$5,000,000, on which approximately \$500,000 in tornado insurance was carried.

Weather Presaged Terrible Storm.

Preceding the storm the weather was cloudy and unsettled, growing abnormally warm toward evening with intermittent hail and rain. For hours the barometers showed the lowest registration. A shower of rain, succeeding hail, ushered in the tempest, and a torrent followed it from a sky of faint yellowish hue, soon deepening into red with rising tongues of flames from buildings set afire by the storm. But a little while and the rain ceased, nightfall was utterly black, darkness everywhere, as all electric and gas street lights went out, then the mercury began to fall, and within an hour and a half the air was biting, steadily growing colder through the night.

Thousands of people saw the fatal funnel-shaped cloud rise out of the southwest and many watched it throughout its course. It was of dull greyish color and seemed to emit smoke as it came on its mission of death. But those who saw it, while,

perhaps, haunted by the vision, will never forget that horrifying roar accompanying it. It was a steadily-sustained, deep, terrible rumbling like the grunt of some hideous monster in distress, and it vibrated with a sort of hum as if keeping time to its terrible velocity. Nearer and nearer it comes, more depressing and deadening and sickening the sound. In the epic speech of the Roman poet, "thunder roars from pole to pole, the sky glazes with repeated flashes and all nature threatens them with immediate death."

Personal Experiences and Observations.

Some have tried to describe this tornado cloud as many great engines rumbling on abreast to destroy a city. Remarkable experiences have been related by those who stood and gazed at what they believed to be their doom.

Many charmed by the glamor, or transfixed by fear, or bewildered beyond fright, stood still and gazed at the fleeting inferno, while others fled for refuge to cellars or lay prostrate upon the ground, and some of both were taken, and some spared. Cellars did not prove a sure retreat in every case. Many became in a twinkling the dark chambers of death.

The first trace of the tornado within Omaha's limits was at Fifty-fourth and Center streets. From there it traveled north, veering slightly to the east, to Leavenworth street. Thence it traversed a northeasterly course to Fortieth and Farnam, clearing its path as it went. At Fortieth and Farnam it spread its ominous wings until they stretched from Forty-second on the west to Thirty-eighth on the east, and thus arrayed, it tore like a ravishing demon down to the north. Apparently it had directed its course in a straight line, centering about Fortieth and Forty-first streets, but suddenly in a new caprice it veered again a little to the east and touched its most northern point on the west at

Saunders school, Forty-first avenue and Cass streets.

Wise folk say cyclones and tornadoes, once they strike a lowland, will keep to it instead of turning uphill.

That is only one of the many vagaries people indulge about these phenomena.

Wrecks the Homes of Wealth.

In veering it mounted the beautiful heights of Thirty-eighth street, crowned with costly dwellings, mostly new and built of solid material. Into their midst it dipped as in fiendish mockery of the magnificence puny man had wrought. And it tore through this region of wealth and beauty as if it were a canebreak, hurling houses, or parts of houses, high into the air and far down the slope of the hill to the east.

But these cruel wings which had spread at Fortieth and Farnam encompassed that rich row of architectural beauty ranging along Thirty-ninth, from Farnam north to Davenport, buttressed by the Joslyn castle.

W. A. Smith's new burnt brick residence, just north of Thirty-ninth and Farnam corner, escaped with but slight damage, but the red stone home of H. H. Baldrige, the Crofoot residence, a massive frame structure, built and once occupied by former President H. G. Burt of the Union Pacific; the Redick place; several others newer and as handsome, were cruelly handled in this rampage. Casper E. Yost's large grey brick at Thirty-ninth and Davenport was given a few cursory slaps as the wind leaped in ghoully glee to wreck the towering turrets of the Joslyn castle.

And here about this great estate one catches a new conception of the velocity of cyclones. The Joslyn place is enclosed with a heavy stone wall, surmounted by strong iron fencing, which is deep set in the stone. Before the wind this—both stone

(Continued on Page Two.)



Judge W.W. Slabaugh's Home
40th and Dodge Sts.